



# BEING KIND TO YOURSELF – HOW DOES IT AFFECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?



**Be kind to yourself.** It sounds like a simple thing to do, but in reality, how often do we take the time to be kind to ourselves? With the pressures of everyday life, it's easy to forget to prioritise ourselves. But kindness brings benefits to everyone, including you and your own mental health. Kindness is defined by doing something towards yourself and others, motivated by a genuine desire to make a positive difference.

So why is being kind to ourselves so important? The truth is that it impacts massively upon your mental health and wellbeing. Studies have shown that practicing kindness can boost serotonin and dopamine levels in your brain, which are known as the “feel good, happy hormones”. On the other hand, negative emotions such as anger and jealousy contribute to the production of cortisol – the “stress hormone” – which in turn, can affect our physical wellbeing in the form of a weakened immune system. Simply put, being kinder in our daily lives can reduce stress and improve our emotional wellbeing and physical health.

Kindness to ourselves can prevent shame from corroding our sense of identity and help boost our self-esteem. It can even improve feelings of confidence and optimism.

## MOOD SELF-ASSESSMENT

We are currently in an unprecedented situation with COVID-19 and the changes this has brought to our personal and professional lives. This can have an impact on our mental health, and it's important to understand and acknowledge how we feel. The NHS have devised an online Mood Self-Assessment Tool, which you can use to help you better understand how you've been feeling recently. As with everything on the Festival of Kindness, this is completely optional but might be helpful to you:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mood-self-assessment/>

## HOW CAN I BE KIND TO MYSELF?

Throughout The Festival of Kindness, we're going to be sharing content and ideas with you on how you be kind to yourself, which we hope you'll find useful and informative. However, self-care can look like different things for different people. So, as a starter, think about the relationship you have with yourself. Self-care is about looking after yourself and your mental health. The relationship you have with yourself is crucial to

your own wellbeing and also to creating healthy and happy relationships with others. Being kind to yourself regularly is one of the best things you can do for yourself. Here are a few habits you can start today that can bring about a positive change to improving the relationship you have with yourself:



- Invest in yourself: Spend 15-30 minutes each day doing something that uplifts you

- If you stumble or feel you have failed, don't beat yourself up. Act as if you were your own best friend: be kind and supportive
- Do something to wind down at the end of each day
- Take a few minutes each day to appreciate yourself

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Astrea Academy Trust is proud to launch to all our employees a bespoke Employee Assistance Programme provided by [Health Assured](#). Some of the features available for all employees to access are:

- A 24/7, 365 help line, with calls answered by experienced in-house counsellors, legal and financial specialists
- Health e-Hub smartphone app and online personalised wellbeing content, including videos, webinars, mini health checks and health coaching
- Reporting analytics, management information and organisational benchmarking
- Specialist telephone and onsite critical incident and trauma support

If you have identified that do not feel ok and would benefit from accessing mental health therapies or advice, please utilise this support via your log on details which will be shared with you via email during the Festival of Kindness week. This service is particularly useful for anyone who may be feeling anxious or worried in the current climate particularly those who are considering a return to the workplace in the near future.

It is heart wrenching to acknowledge that the nation has mourned an astronomical number of loved ones during the Covid-19 crisis and devastatingly the number of bereavements continue to rise. Astrea Academy Trust would like to extend our deepest sympathies to all of our employees and family members who may have been affected by a bereavement of a loved one during this time.

As part of your access to the Employee Assistant Programme you will have access to bereavement support and counselling services. Please contact a member of the Health Assured Team who are on standby to take your call and access the right support for you at this moment in time. There are also charities you can contact who will provide support to you and your family should you be grieving the passing of a loved one, [Careforthefamily.org](#) and [Mind.org](#) provide specialist advice in this area.

Stay tuned throughout the week for more ideas on how you can be kind to yourself!

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#BEKIND